

Shawn Nevins contacted me through email a few days back and asked if I'd do a telephone interview with him to be posted on his website. For some unknown reason, since I mostly keep to myself about this subject, I agreed. He told me the way this works is for him to call me and I'm to record my end of the conversation and he would record his, and then I was to send him my recording and he'd put them together and it'd sound like we were having a conversation right there in the same room. Great idea! So he called me up a few days later and we did a phone interview to be played back on this podcast. I failed to get my side of the conversation recorded due to my ignorance of modern technology. But I went back and listened to the part that I did get recorded of myself and I got really tired really quick of my ramblin' and searchin' for the right words as I tried to remember the events and the sequence in which they happened. It ended up being a pure gom as far as my part went. So I decided to sit down and write the whole thing out as I remember it happenin' and get the events in the right order, and also articulate it without ramblin'. I've been threatenin' to do this over the years just for my own amusement, but I hadn't gotten around to it. I didn't want to leave ol' Shawn hangin' so I decided to record my account of the journey and the things I've discovered along the way.

So before I launch into my recount, I'd like to say thank you, Shawn, for maybe unknowingly shammin' me into finally puttin' this down in some recorded form. I know it's not a dialogue like you usually do with folks but maybe we can do one of those later, when I get a little bit more computer savvy. You are of course free to post this on your podcast page or you can delete it. It doesn't make no difference to me either way. At any rate I'm glad you showed up so I could have the opportunity to revisit these events that span the whole of my lifetime thus far and speak about what has been my passion and most dear to me. I'm sittin' here in my friend Matt's studio and he's going to record this for me, so I don't screw it up again. Thanks Matt. [both laughing] I'm going to tell you right up front the whole of what I've discovered in one sentence: There is absolutely nothing here, and everything is proof of it. [chuckles] That's it. A whole lifetime of searching and finding culminates in that one phrase. A paradox. I've ended up with a paradox, finding myself to be a negation that affirms everything to be that very negation. It's an affirmative negation. What I came to find in 57 years of contemplatin', diggin', and searchin' revealed this whole show we call life and the universe in which it appears to all be imagination, if looked upon as something other than myself. If I look upon it as myself, then all of it is real, or the Real. I ended up finding no seeker, nor anything to seek, nor anything to find or recognize. I can't say what it is that I am, but it is without a doubt without a blemish, and it is the constant and changeless essence and identity of the ever-changing life I seem to be participating in. I found we need not acquire anything or relinquish anything to be what we couldn't possibly escape. What I've come to find through all my seekin' and findin' culminates in the whole of existence to be a mirage from one viewpoint, and reality from another. Now what is a mirage? It's somethin' that appears to be there, but isn't. There is a Hindu sayin' that captures what I'm

speaking of beautifully. It reads, *The world is illusion. Only Brahman is real. The world IS Brahman.* When I first read this it was such a joyful confirmation--this is exactly what I had come to recognize. The world I see now I see in the same way I've always seen it, only now the world is recognized to be what I am. The world reflects my identity back to me. Without the mirage or the world I couldn't have come to this recognition. No mirage, no recognition. Without the sense of the Doer, or duality, there is no sense of unity or singular identity. Even this recognition of everything being myself is really a mirage, too. As you'll later hear, it certainly wasn't a relief at the onset of recognizing these things. It was a shock to find myself and the universe to have never existed. It is an acquired taste for sure. All the intuitive perceptive shifts I'm going to talk about ended up revealin' that existence and non-existence are not only ideas, but are impossibilities. I'm not saying one should throw the world away, but when one recognizes the world to be one's vacuous consciousness and identity, the world no longer holds up as something other than one's own essence and quintessence, which is found to be totally void of objectivity and subjectivity. I don't expect you to understand what I'm talking about, and there's no way under the sun to prove a single thing I'm telling ya. There's no scientific proof for anything I've got to say, because what I've recognized myself to be can't be measured or detected by any instrument, or calculated by any mathematical equation. What I'm talking about has nothing to do with belief; it's my direct experience. I don't expect anyone to buy into my story, and I sure wouldn't have bought into it myself if someone had told me this 41 years ago.

All these revelations I'm going to speak of have come via intuitive shifts in perception. Each one was spontaneous, sudden, and nothing shy of a gift. No matter the conceptual understandin' I gained through readin' the words of others, it always took an intuitive shift in perception before there was any real understandin' or apprehension. Just sayin'.

I've tried to share this gift and find over the years with a few folks, I'm looked upon as a crazy man, a lunatic. That's why I just go around from day to day here in the Bible Belt taking care of what needs tendin' to and mixin' and minglin' with folks when necessary, and keepin' my mouth shut about this matter. I have no bodhisattva inclinations of savin' the world and those in it. The world and all those walkin' on it are already what I am and there's not a spot or blemish to be found with what I am or what I view. I didn't seek the truth to save the world, but I did find it already saved in the moment I recognized my true identity.

So what I've come to find myself to be is what you are. And what everything is. And I can't tell you what that is. All I can say is that it is for sure and I am it, and it is not even an it. So I'm completely unknowable and unknown as something, yet, I remain unbroken, even in deep sleep. I didn't come from anywhere, I ain't a-goin' anywhere, and I'm not anywhere particular at this moment. I'm really not void, nor am I not void, nor any condition nameable. And that includes the condition of conditionless. I'm not extinct, yet I am extinct of any relative quality, including peace, love, bliss, or any such tomfoolery. Nothing at all applies to

me, yet I remain as the quintessence of everything. I'm not light or darkness. I am that I am, and I couldn't possibly know what I am, because I'm unknowable, and prior to lateral knowledge of any sort.

So all you peace-seekers are out of luck if you're lookin' to this talk to help you find solace in a transient state of relative peace that is not totally with you and as you at this very moment. As far as I'm concerned, there is the recognition of peace with this, finally, but it is abiding and beyond any conceptual understandin' or acquisition. It is constant and changeless and not subject to be threatened, nor is it wavering.

Now I'm going to recount my dream story and findin's while I can still remember them, but I'm tellin' ya right up front, the whole charade I'm about to spit out really never happened. Nor did it even not happen. I'm still apparently playin' the human bein' game, while at the same time not participating, and am beyond certain that none of this is really happenin'. As far as my findings go, we already know what we are, and it's already right out in the wide open in plain view. But we need an intuitive shift in perception to recognize it. All this seekin' business is just a scary dream that'll finally evaporate in time, along with time. In the words of the great Hui Neng, who lived in the sixth century and became the 6th patriarch, he said, *From the very beginning, there never has been a single thing.* Ah! Yes, I concur.

This one phrase won him the robe and bowl from the fifth patriarch. But this "not a single thing" he is making reference to is what is peering out of your eyes right now, and is surely a marvel beyond description when it's apprehended. Ahhhhh, it's really a magnificent find and definitely an acquired taste after thinking oneself is a minute speck in a universe so big that it can never be mentally or physically fathomed.

I'd also like to add before I get started: this is only my story, and I don't expect anyone else's story to tally with mine. I discovered these things alone, and without the help of anyone that I could talk to about it. There was no one to talk to about this matter around my neck of the woods. I was raised in the country as a farm boy right out in the heart of the Bible Belt where all I heard about was hellfire and brimstone. No gurus around here, at least none that I knew about. My teachers were the sun, moon, stars, dirt, wind, trees, and critters. All of 'em were preachin' the truth of what I am, always. The human beings I was exposed to were always teaching me what I am not. So the teachers were there, but it took me a long time to recognize them as teachers, and what they were ceaselessly trying to show me.

My greatest teacher was with me always: my true self. In the early days I referred to that teacher as God. I didn't know for a long time that God and I were inseparable, and that there was no God, really, nor was there really a me either. I felt alone, and forsaken, for what seemed to be an eternity. Although I felt this presence I called God very near, I felt

alone. I didn't realize this aloneness would reveal itself to be what I was looking for, to be the singular identity and essence of all.

I had no eastern philosophy books to read for a long time, thank goodness, or I may have never found my way. I have no "hero complex" about walkin' this trek alone, but I mention the solitary trek because I'd like to say what we are can be recognized no matter where you are, or what your life condition happens to be.

I might also add there is one outstanding feature that came with each and every one of these perceptual shifts that I came upon, and we'll talk about, and that, each shift revealed an intuitive insight of something about myself that was already in place and right out in the wide open. I never once came upon anything new, or unusual. Each discovery was matter-of-fact. Not from the beginning have I ever attained anything. Each shift in perception allowed an intuitive view of something about myself that I had always known, but wasn't conscious of being conscious of. Each shift afforded a view of something about myself I'd been overlooking. Something that the birds, trees, bugs, and the wind had been coaxing me to see all along.

If I were asked what the main ingredient is to finding out what you are, I'd say desperate earnestness is the key. That's the catalyst that'll take you all the way to recognition and acclimation. But this is an organic factor. Desperate earnestness is not something one acquires. It seems to be a terrible vexation that comes upon one to where nothing in life can satisfy, except to get at the truth, at any cost.

As far as I can tell, this is no path for casual intrigue. It has been terribly demanding and has stretched me mentally, emotionally, and physically beyond the limits of what I thought I could endure. It hasn't been a one and done event either. It has taken a whole lifetime of constant pursuit, devotion, and attention. But make no mistake, I'm speaking about a phenomenal set of events that never happened as anything less than a dream. A most marvelous, and beneficial, and terrifyin' dream; but at any rate, only a dream at best.

Definition of terms... I need to define some terms that I'll be usin' to describe the three intuitive shifts of identification I've encountered.

The first thing I need to do is to define what mean when I say "intuitive shift in perception." Now I'll bet sometime in your life you've been exposed to a stereogram. You know, it's a piece of paper with a whole bunch of dots on it. And that's what it looks like--just a paper with dots on it. But someone says, "There's an image of a rabbit in those dots," and at first glance you don't see the image of the rabbit. So you keep on focusing your eyes in different ways until "Bingo!" the image of the rabbit appears.

Now, this is an intuitive shift. This is a great metaphor for self-discovery. As in the stereogram, the rabbit was there all the time, but you couldn't see it at first. But it *was there* the whole time. After seein' it, you can't not see it.

So this account of my quest is only a pointing towards angles of perceptions that you must apprehend for yourself. You'll have to apprehend them through intuitive perceptive shifts of your own. All I'm doing is telling you there is a rabbit within those dots that you'll have to discover for yourself.

Three angles of perception. There are three distinct angles of perception that I've discovered so far that make up my singular nature. There must be intuitive shifts in perception for these to be recognized. You can conceptualize about 'em till the land looks level, but until the intuitive shifts occur, you ain't gonna have a clue as to what I'm talkin' about.

I find that I'm a singular fact, and it is a multidimensional fact, if you will. A trinity. As one whole I refer to myself as "the triune self," which is *the doer*, *absolute consciousness*, and *absolute identity*. All three of these at once. I came upon these three angles of perception one at a time. Nowadays, the three angles of perception have interfaced or homogenized into one conscious experience. The three are one, and they've always been one, it's just plain ol' me, no bells, no whistles. Nothing special, or nothing holy.

Here they are spelled out.

Number one, the doer idea. This is the fallacious idea that I am an independent and individual entity with a free will. This is the limited sense of "I," and it is very important to be seen for what it is and *used* for what it is. Some schools teach that this is the ego and it is to be gotten rid of. I couldn't disagree more. This very sense of I that you sense and feel right at this very instant is your true, quintessential identity and essence, only identifying in a limited way. This I is the truth right now, the supreme reality. Yes, your right now "I" is the same I you have always identified as, all your life. It has never changed, nor could it. Without the sense of a separate I there would be no me and you, there would be no conversation and no world, nor would there be any experience, for there would be no duality or experiencer. But this particular I-sense is certainly not the whole picture. As for my findings, the doer-sense starts to identify differently as the intuitive shifts in perception occur.

Now I'm not going to bash the teaching community much, but I gotta point out one proclamation that I've heard more than once which can be very misleading to one trying to get on to who and what they are. These accounts you've heard about of those enlightened

people saying that their sense of I went away and never came back is just a bunch of bullshit as far as I'm concerned.

Let's look at this unfounded proclamation. Who says, "MY sense of I went away." *Who says it?* Do you understand? Again, who says, "MY I-sense went away." Now this means somethin' didn't go away. And that somethin' that didn't go away is "My" which is the same self, "I" that they just proclaimed went away. I'll say it again a little differently: "My sense of self went away." *That is the Self*, the supreme reality, saying itself went away. I hope you are not paying these people money to lead you into a ditch. Look, nothin' about you goes away, okay? If it can go away, it was never there in the first place.

Alright, that's the end of the guru bashin'.

Now granted, I'll agree that the solid sense of an I may have been found to be void of any solidity or validity as something or someone. But this separate sense of I they are speaking of that went away didn't go away or they wouldn't even be conscious to talk about it. The I that registers the sense of limitation is already and always not limited and doesn't change or go away when it's found that it's never existed as an independent entity.

Also, the world doesn't go away either when you find it out to be totally empty and void of one atom. The atoms remain just as they were, only now they're found to be purely phenomenal and illusory as something other than oneself. The world remains when you recognize your true essence and quintessence, and so does the doer idea.

So this is the good news: you don't have to, or need to try to get rid of yourself. You're only seeking to find out what you really are beyond the misconceptions built up over your lifetime or apparent lifetimes.

But here's another disclaimer: you can't conceptually ever know what you really are because you find yourself to be unknowable and unknown. You can intuit being unknowable and unknown. I'm beyond certain of that. But you can't know it as something, or a concept.

In order for what we are to be recognized, there has to be a series of intuitive shifts in perception for this to be apprehended. At least, this has been my experience with it. No amount of conceptualization ever did me any good. No amount of sittin' around with my eyes closed in meditation, tryin' to be still, ever did me any good in tryin' to resolve this conundrum. The terrific need to know the truth seemed to make the way clear for these spontaneous shifts in intuitive perception to occur. So, I never willfully made one of them happen by practicing anything.

All my practicin' ended in failure to achieve. Each shift into clear vision was a gift that followed total failure to achieve. Like the rabbit in the stereogram, you can't force him into recognition. When you do recognize him, it is a gift. And it is all at once, and final. But if you don't try to see him, you probably ain't gonna see him [laughs], and so it seems to take a lot of strainin' and strugglin' to find what's already in place, and that's what the intuitive shifts are about.

I can stand flat-footed and tell ya that I didn't make any of this shift in perception happen for myself. Each one came spontaneously out of nowhere. Each one was sudden and final. Now, gettin' acclimated to them after their revelation was surely not sudden or final. It's taken years and years, and today I'm only a beginner when it comes to fathoming what has been revealed. With each passin' moment of each passin' day I become more acclimated to the revelatory intuitive shifts that occurred over the years. I don't see any end to recognizing what they have to offer, for how could one ever hope to fathom the infinite effulgent voidness of absolute consciousness?

Next term up is absolute consciousness - this'll be ol' number two here. Now, you may be wonderin', why is he usin' the term "absolute" in front of the term "consciousness?" I use it because I don't want anyone to think I'm talking about consciousness meaning waking consciousness, or like, "he lost consciousness," or "when I regain consciousness." I'm using the term consciousness to mean the absolute essence of everything. From thoughts, emotions, energy, atoms, world, universe, or anything imaginable or unimaginable, consciousness is the singular essence of all. Consciousness is the all. Besides it, there is no other, so we are putting anything and everything under this umbrella. This is why I use the term absolute consciousness. This term refers to my beingness. And the self-same beingness of not only myself, but the singular all-encompassing and all-inclusive void-beingness or intelligence of everything. Even awareness is a product of absolute consciousness.

I like to call it beingness 'cause I can feel-sense beingness, and I figure you can, too. I mean how could you miss it? It's radiatin' from you right now, as you, right here in this moment. It is effulgent, visceral, radiant, and absolutely void of any objectivity or subjectivity whatsoever. Absolute consciousness as I'm using the term *is* the Great Void you may have heard about somewhere along the way in your reading or whatever.

The Great Void. Some refer to it as awareness--that's fine, too. But the way I'm using it, the way I like to talk about it I prefer, beingness. When one has the intuitive shift of actually being this vacuous beingness they may try to articulate it as no-self, since it is empty of content. One may say, after recognizing this, "Oh, I am nothingness. I never existed as a someone or somebody, yaaay. I have always been this void effulgence and it's empty of content, and it's constant. There is no me in here. I never have been bound. I'm freedom

itself, yaaay, I have found it! Isn't this exciting?" Yeah, yeah, yeah. This is a great find, alright, but give it a few days or weeks to sink in. Just wait until this emptiness really hits home, and you can't find yourself. You can't find yourself to be anything at all, not even a witness. Try finding the witness. When it really strikes home that there is no one in there, and never was, that yippy-yummy business of emptiness all changes then.

But let's look at what has happened here. All it really amounts to is a change in identification. So nothing really has changed except the way one identifies. One goes from thinking oneself a solid and individual entity to discovering through an intuitive perceptive shift there is nothing solid about oneself. He finds himself to be vacuous emptiness with no locus. It's been this way all the time, only now one recognizes it to be the fact, a fact that he can't even deny.

After this intuitive perceptual shift has occurred, the doer has recognized his real, true voidness alright, but it may still be an object to him. He is still in view of it even though he can feel it to be his true essence. At this point it is a void effulgence the doer is associating with. But when this voidness starts to claim the doer, the rolls are starting to be reversed. And this can scare the living shit out of the doer. Instead of the doer being conscious of his voidness, the rolls flipflop and the voidness becomes aware of the doer. So the doer finds himself to actually be voidness, and this can take some getting used to. Nothing has really changed except how the doer is identifying. The doer-sense didn't disappear. This angle of perception must remain if one is to function in the world of opposites. Nothing has fallen off, nor gone away. The identification has only morphed.

The whole time it is only you making the transition from identifyin' in the old way to the new way. This is a hell of a transition and shift of identification. There ain't anything yummy about this, or at least there wasn't in my case. The doer-idea suffers an existential death and is reborn into being the All instead of an individual unit aware of the All. This is a good example of the acclimation process I mentioned earlier that has gone along with these intuitive perceptual shifts that I've encountered.

After finding oneself to be absolute consciousness there is the possibility one can have another shift in perception to where they intuitively sense their selfsame void beingness to actually *be* everything they register through their senses. At this point they have come upon what I call unitive consciousness, or oneness. They are one with everything imaginable, makes no difference if it is animate, inanimate, alive, or dead, benevolent or malevolent. This unity is all inclusive.

These two shifts in perception can happen individually as two separate events, or can occur simultaneously as one singular event. But again, nothing has changed except the way the doer is identifying with his environment. Nothing has fallen off or gone away.

One may fall in love with everything when this shift occurs, but that ain't gonna last, because it's one-sided. Now just as soon as someone kicks you in the nuts or steals your car, or both, that cotton-candy love will fly right out the window and you'll be wondering what happened to your enlightenment. You'll be introduced to real love, but will you notice it? Will you be acclimated and seasoned enough to recognize love then? That's a different animal altogether. Love, as far I'm concerned, is recognizing oneself to be everything, no matter what it is, or how it shows up. And that includes hate--nothing is left out, *no holds barred*. I ain't got any patience with the glassy-eyed goopy one-sided spiritual or religious version of love preached from the pulpit. It's faked and contrived. To recognize all of it to be what I am, be it gentle or rough, loving or hateful, and to be clear enough to love or hate anything and everything without a second thought or runnin' anything through filters: that's love to me.

I've noticed a few times I've been around seekers, they seemed to have an inflated, unfounded notion of how someone should conduct themselves after self-recognition. If they had the opportunity with such a person for a few days they might be surprised and shocked at how normal they are. This person still gets pissed off, and angry, just like anyone else, except he doesn't have a self-judgmental filter of guilt. He can be spontaneous without recourse to guilt. He chews tobacco, drinks beer, and rye whiskey. He eats all different kinds of meat and curses like a sailor. [laughs] There's no specific way one acts after self-recognition.

These people you see trying to put on a spiritual image--you might oughta steer clear of them.

So, absolute consciousness for me is the heart and soul of Advaita Vedanta, or non-dual awareness, which includes positive as well as negative. It can be said to be the benevolent *and* the malevolent, both and neither, and beyond both and neither. This non-dual awareness has no qualities, but it is the source and essence of all qualities, without itself being a quality.

I like the gold metaphor when talking about this angle of perception: it doesn't make any difference what kind of ornament you make out of gold, the gold is always gold without being any ornament. No matter what shape the gold is fashioned into, it remains itself gold, pure and untainted. Gold has no original shape. The shape it is fashioned into has no effect on its gold nature. Same goes for absolute consciousness--it is what everything really is, and it is totally extinct of any quality, yet is the sum-total of all qualities.

Next up is number 3: Absolute Identity. Now again, I'm using the term "absolute" in front of identity for a reason. Your name may be Mary, and Mary is your relative identity amongst

your fellow human race. Well, what was Mary's identity before she was given the name "Mary?" *That* identity is what I'm referring to. Your identity before there was a universe; that's the identity I'm speaking of. In deep sleep, what is your identity? What is your name then?

Absolute identity is not about your relative identity, but it's not different from your relative identity either. That identity that identifies with the name Mary is it. The sense of I without a relative name is what I'm talking about, and this identity can be intuited to be the identity of everything, including absolute consciousness, with the help of an intuitive shift in perception.

This angle of perception leaves me with very few words to point it out. This is my true identity, or in zen, "Original Face." It is the authority and author of my everyday *me*, or *I*. The identity of "I"--the I[or eye?] of the I. The only qualitative terms that even come close to describing it is *authoritative immediacy*, *glass-breaking immediacy* that is authorship. Absolute identity is the identity of absolute consciousness as well as the identity of the doer-idea. Same identity, same authorship.

This was my first intuitive shift that came after 34 years of seekin'. Had I come upon absolute consciousness first, you probably wouldn't have ever been able to convince me there was anything else, or any other angle of perception. I've already experienced the futility of trying to point this out to those who have come upon absolute consciousness first. It ain't nothin' but a waste of time.

So to try and make a simple distinction between the two angles of perception of consciousness and identity I'll just pick somethin' simple and keep it simple. If you don't have a pencil handy just use your imagination and visualize one in your head. Now you're lookin' at the pencil. If you're onto the recognition of absolute consciousness to the point of actually sensin' your true essence to be everything, you can view the pencil and immediately *sense-fee!* your unity with it. It's essence or beingness is your essence or beingness. You are one with the pencil. You are the pencil and the pencil is you. You are of the same essence. There really is no two.

After it is recognized that oneness is only an idea or condition, one can clearly see that there really is no oneness with absolute consciousness because there's no twoness to become oneness. Absolute consciousness is just that--it's absolute, and there is nothing but it. This is my experience as absolute consciousness.

Now take the same pencil and look at it, and just as soon as you recognize it as an object you recognize your very identity to be reflected back at you. This is immediate and self-evident as my experience. Oneness in my experience is like radiance, but identity is

immediate authorship. You can actually recognize your identity as the pencil, or in the pencil. It's the same identity as yours right now, your right now ever'day identity.

This is what I'm referring to as absolute identity. Which ends up being the heart of zen. The crack of a whip! The strike of lightning! Authority! Identity! Everything mirrors my identity, my original nameless name, my original faceless face.

So now that we have the definitions of terms all out of the way, I'm gonna tell my story about how I came about discovering my true self. So, here we go.

Becoming conscious of being conscious.

I'll start out by tellin' ya the seekin' began in my case in the baby-bed, when the I-thought emerged out of nowhere. My first major shift was when I became conscious of being conscious in a baby-bed. It was like a switch being flipped on. I arrived, from where I didn't know, the question never came up. I arrived out of the darkness of my natural home into the light of wakin' consciousness. I didn't seem to be shaken, nor was it unusual to be identified as a someone at that time of arrival. There wasn't even anything new or out of the ordinary about it for me. It wasn't like I'd been dropped into some new, weird dimension. I wasn't new or old. I was just conscious of being conscious. I was okay.

I remember my clothing: a navy blue pair of overalls with a white shirt. There was a light-blue baby-bottle layin' on my shoulder. This must have been sometime before I was walking. When I arrived I was looking at the wall across the room: it was pink, and the ceiling was white. These sights were not unfamiliar to me; I must have been registering them subconsciously for some time before being conscious of being conscious. Also, as I describe these colors, I had no such concepts as pink or blue, but I was aware of color just as I am now, only now I have concepts to label 'em.

At this point I had no name, no thought-process, and no agenda. I was just conscious, and I knew I was conscious. For a long time I didn't know why I remembered this moment, but the memory of it would become significant later on. There's a verse in the new testament, it's Mathew chapter 19, verse 14: *Jesus said, suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come unto me, for such is the kingdom of heaven.* The kingdom of heaven he's referring to was with me and as me as an infant, unrecognized.

I must recognize it. And that's what my story is about.

I didn't know that it was going to take a lifetime to get back to that very moment in the baby-bed and appreciate it for what it was. That which became conscious in the baby-bed is what' talkin' to you right now. It hadn't learned a thing, hadn't forgotten anything, made any progress, nor has it been liberated from anything, for its never been bound. That which arrived and became conscious of being conscious in the baby bed was completely whole and without a stain or blemish, just as it is right now talkin' to you.

At this point, I was just conscious of being me lookin' at my surroundings. I do remember there being a longing with me from the very beginning. It came with the program of being conscious. For all I know, this may be the case for everyone. I wasn't aware of what the longing was about until later on, but it was definitely with me when I arrived. As I grew, a loneliness and longing for divine union, which was already in place, would grow as I grew. This was with me right from the very first moment of identified consciousness. It would remain with me until the day, and drive me to find my true essence and identity.

So I started seekin' when I first became conscious of identified consciousness. I showed up seekin'. I had to get a few years under my belt and develop physically and mentally before going after this quest could formulate. I had the sense of something greater than my personal self with me early on before I got indoctrinated into the religious dogma and felt something near, a presence, very near, visceral, and available, but I just didn't know how to get at it. I remember lying under the pine trees as a young feller about seven or eight years old, lookin' up through the pine needles and at the sky with the white clouds floatin' by, and wonderin', "*What am I missing? What am I not seeing?*" There was a longing to join somehow. There was something so near, but just out of reach, yet right her with me.

I had heard the concept of a male God when I was young, since my mother would make me and my younger brother go to church. I didn't have any trouble believin' in God, made sense to me. I could look around, see that I didn't really know what anything was, and for sure I didn't create anything. Somebody must've created it, 'cause it sure wasn't me. But what they were saying in church about God didn't make any sense to me. The preachers would scream and holler and get red in the face and talk about me going to hell if I didn't do God's will, and if I didn't accept Jesus Christ as my personal savior and all that. It just never made any sense to me. I felt God to be at hand and never felt him to be judgmental towards me. I felt like he created me, and if he did, he must surely love me and watch out for me. I started longin' to know him, and to find out what our relationship was as I continued to grow up.

As I gained the power of common logic and reasoning I began to put two and two together, and what the preachers were saying about God wasn't addin' up at all. It just wasn't true for me. It couldn't be true because it was a total contradiction. They would say, "God loves you...but he will send you to hell for eternity if you don't do what he says." *Bullshit*. I ain't

believin' that. The sermons I was hearing were not helping me know God. They were puttin' a wall up between me and him. I had come to recognize these bastards didn't know what they were talkin' about, and I was gonna have to do somethin' else if I was gonna get to the bottom of this.

So, I started lookin' for another way. When I was the age of sixteen, I put together emotionally and logically that I was gonna have to find God on my own if this longing was to ever go away or be satiated. So one night I was walkin' across the livin' room floor, and there was an inner voice that said with authority, "*Go read the bible.*" So I did. I just happened to have one that was given to me by my Sunday school teacher, had my name on it and everything. It was the King James version.

I was enamoured with the Jesus-story that I'd been hearing about all along, so I started with the New Testament. I had already decided the common belief system around the community was off the mark, so I decided to read it with fresh eyes and try to get to the bottom of what it was talking about. I could feel there was something true about the words of Jesus, but I didn't really know what it was. There was something about the story that rang true though. The story, when I read it, didn't have anything to do with what I'd heard from the pulpit or Sunday school class.

What was most striking about the story was here was a man claimin' to know his divinity, without a shadow of a doubt. I felt like he had recognized what I was starvin' to know. It was evident to me that the religious community had made an idol out of Jesus, and had totally missed the meaning of his message. Something was terribly wrong with what I'd been told about the man and his message. So I decided that I was going to find out what he knew. Made no difference the price I had to pay, nor how long it took, I was going to have to go against convention, though. I was going to have to strike out into the unknown alone and find something that no one in my surroundings understood or could help me with. I felt like I could get it someday if I tried hard enough, but I felt like I could get into some serious trouble messin' with it. But I had to know. There wasn't any choice left but to find out.

I didn't feel like God would condemn me to hell if I was doing the best I could to try to get to him, and I was gonna get to him, even if it killed me. I had done decided that if it did kill me I'd just come back and let it kill me as many times as it took to get to it.

When I made this commitment I was visited with my first encounter of real fear. I didn't know at the time what this fear was about, but I do now. There's a Bible verse that reads, "*For whoever will save his life, shall lose it. And whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it.*" In other words, I ended up finding out for myself, if you're going to find out for

yourself what Jesus had realized and pointing towards, you will surely lose your life as you know it.

And oh Lord, how true those words ended up being!

This fear is the fear of losing one's idea of themselves as they find out the truth of themselves. The whole of it, as far as I'm concerned, is only a perceptive correction of identification. I mean you just end up recognizing yourself to not be a little insignificant human bein' that is subject to birth and death. You find yourself to be the whole truth *itself*, which is timeless, spaceless, and eternal. You find yourself to be nothing at all that is nameable or knowable. This is a tall order to comprehend when you think yourself to be a minute little human being in a vast and scary universe. So the correction of identification happens when one's perception is shifted from being separate to being the singular essence and identity of all. And so for this to happen, at least in my case, there was the experience of death, many times, as I would be born again into clearer view and experiences until the whole thing collapsed into the recognition that the whole of it was nothing more than a dream that never even happened.

In my case there have been many experiences of death, so many that I actually got to be friends with death. So the way I articulate it, this fear is really the fear of God, the fear of *being* God, or the source of everything, or whatever you want to call it. It's the great existential death that we pass through on the way to discoverin' that we aren't anything nameable or locatable. The death of the egocentric separate doer, or "doer-idea," as being a real or solid entity is really all that death is about. This fear for me was the beginning of the dark night of the soul that John of the Cross spoke of. The dark night of the soul ended up lasting decades in my case. I suffered dying for it seemed like an eternity, moment to moment, day after day, year after year. It made no sense to me that I'd be suffering fear when I was reachin' for the highest goal imaginable. I didn't understand why God was lettin' this go on while I was so earnestly devoted to findin' him, but I figured he knew he was doin'. At least one of us knew what they were doin'.

Besides, I was already committed to stayin' the course at any price, even unto death. You know, I had already somehow known intuitively that this very venture was why I was born. This was what all the constant naggin', longin', and all the discomfort had been about my whole life. And I really had no other choice than to find out what I was lookin' for, and I really didn't know what it was that I was lookin' for. I could feel it near, but I didn't know what it was, and it seems crazy to be seekin' somethin' that you don't even know what you're seekin'. I didn't know what I was lookin' for and what it was going to look like when I found it. All I knew to call it was God. I didn't have a preconceived notion of what God looked like, but I didn't think of him to be a bearded old man with a tablet takin' down names and gettin' ready to kick ass when I died. No, I wasn't under that assumption at all, even

though I'd been taught that my whole life. Whatever he was, however he appeared, I somehow knew him to be true and good, something I could know, and I had the feelin' he was going to reveal himself to me if I just keep on tryin' to get at him.

The New Testament reads, "*Seek and ye shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to ya.*" Somewhere in me I felt that to be true, and I kept that verse in mind all the way.

Prayer seemed to be my constant state, even when I wasn't conscious of it. I prayed a lot. I prayed, *Lord, please show me how to get to ya. Show me the way. Let me see and know the truth.*

Somethin' was brought up about prayin' one time at the dinner table, and I remember hearin' my Granddaddy say, "You don't have to keep on repeatin' a prayer over and over. God hears you the first time, so ask it once and let it be. If you believe he heard it, and that he's gonna answer it, then wait for him to answer it, and leave off the vain repetitions." That right there felt right to me. So I mostly felt the prayer instead of repeatin' a bunch of words. This way I was in constant prayer. I had asked to be shown the way and I felt certain that I was gonna be shown, whatever that way was. My prayer was like a receptive reaching, without words.

So the Bible was pretty much all I had of any real value to read from my sixteenth year until I was thirty-three years old. Each day I watched and waited to be answered. Days turned into years. Seventeen years is a long time to suffer and wait on God to answer. But I never gave up on him. I figured maybe he was makin' me ready in some way.

Hope. Hope was all I had.

The suffering really wasn't all that bad up to this point because I wasn't wantin' to know the truth for any favors such as the relief as sufferin'. I only wanted to know the truth first-hand, and if sufferin' was what it took, then so be it.

The shift of absolute identity.

The Course in Miracles.

When I was coming up on thirty-three years old I'd been readin' on the Bible and contemplatin' God for seventeen years without a sign of any breakthrough. But that was all fixin' to change. I was walkin' through the livin' room one day and Oprah Winfrey was playin' on the TV and Deepak Chopra was Oprah's guest, and I hadn't heard of him and I sure hadn't heard of what he was talkin' about either. But what he was sayin' caught my ear. He was talkin' about Eastern Philosophy, so I sat down and listened. I thought, "Now

this is different. This is more like it. He's talkin' about what I'm lookin' for in a *whole* different way." Somethin' about what he was sayin' was music to my ears.

So I went right to the bookstore the next time I was in Nashville and looked up some of his material. I bought a cassette tape of his and listened to it. He made reference to A Course in Miracles a couple of times. *I thought to myself, that's what I need right there. I need a miracle.* I had seemingly made no progress all these years, and I needed a miracle of some kind to break through. So I found out where to order the Course from, and I bought the whole thing, including it on cassette tapes so I could listen to it drivin' down the road.

Now for those of you who aren't familiar with the Course in Miracles, it's a 365-day course that is supposed to have been channeled by Jesus through a woman [laughs] who was an atheist of all things. [laughter continues] Yeah... that ought to have been enough right there to run me off.

I know it sounds weird, but I was desperate, so...I needed some sort of help, and I was willin' to try anything to get it. So, one redeeming quality about it though: if Jesus had a hand in it, I trusted him. At this point, the only tool that I knew of up to this particular point in my life, the only two authorities that I even trusted in my quest was God and Jesus, and they weren't talkin'. So this was a major step for me to look at something written down other than the Bible.

I was more than a little apprehensive about the Course so I prayed about it. I said, "Lord, if this ain't right, if it's a fake, let me know and I won't mess with it." And I got kind of an intuitive nudge to go forth with it, so I went right on into it. This was the spring of my thirty-second year, right before turning 33. The first thing I read in the Course was: *Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God.*

Huh. I read that a few times over and scratched my head, and I thought, well, I got a hold of somethin' here that I'm not going to be able to understand. And I remember: this does seem right--I don't know what this means, but I'm fixin' to find out.

And I gotta tell ya, I didn't understand anything I was readin' as I went along in the Course in Miracles, and what I thought that I sorta grasped was really disturbin' to me. Again, I would ask, "Is this right for me, Lord?" And again, I would get an intuitive nudge to keep goin' with it. After a couple of times of prayin' about it I quit worryin' and just went on and did what it prescribed.

According to the Course, it says that anything that threatens to reveal the fallacious ego will feel threatenin', and it was right. The Course in Miracles does a thorough job of calling out the ego and its illusory nature. The whole time I was studyin' it, it was causing anxiety

within me. The feel of the whole thing was threatenin', but I was ready to suffer some sort of existential death if I had to get at the truth in the process.

So I carried on with the Course in Miracles, doing the daily affirmations during the day, and listening to the abstract text as I was driving back and forth to my job where I was playin' music and entertainin' folks three shows a day, while playin' the Grand Ole Opry on the weekends, and doin' matinees during the week. I'd also sometimes get on the airplane with my band and fly out to do county fairs and private corporate shows and things of that nature. I'd fly back to Nashville at night and be back at Operaland the next morning. I was workin' the park six days a week, three shows a day, during the spring, summer, and fall seasons, along with all these other shows as I was doing the Course in Miracles. Nothing could get in my way. I did the course to the letter as best as I could while performing over 650 shows that year. I'm grateful I had this hectic schedule to wear off the anxious energy of tryin' to get at the truth.

I was in the prime of life, and I was gettin' ready to meet God. I had energy to burn, baby, because I really felt like I was on the cusp of finding what I'd been longin' for all my life. The angst that went along with doing the Course in Miracles let up some as I went along and accepted the fact that I didn't and couldn't understand anything I was reading or doing with the course. But the course made it very plain that it wasn't important to understand the words. It made it clear that to do what it said was what was important, whether or not you understood it or not.

It's kinda funny in retrospect; I didn't know this until after the fact, but I found you can't understand the Bible or the Course in Miracles until it's too late. You can't understand any of the masters before it's too late. [laughs] I found out that lateral conceptual knowledge ain't got a thing to do with what I am and what I was aseekin'. All the words can do is point towards the truth--I didn't have anyone to tell me this, so I had to find it out through the school of hard knocks on my own.

I was comin' up on the end of the Course, and there was a feelin' that somethin' was going to happen as I got close to the end of it, the end of the 365-day course. I didn't know what, but I sure felt there was somethin' fixin' to happen.

I had it all worked out to have the text read or listened to along with the Manual for Teachers by the time I finished the 365-day course. So I finished it with great anticipation. I could feel and sense something was going to happen. I was going to find out what I was looking for. This thing was fixin' to pay off!

When I finished it: nothin' happened. Not a *damn* thing! [laughs] *Shit!* [heavy sigh]

So, I kept waitin' for somethin' to happen. And nothin' was happenin'. One day turned into two, and three...then a week passed...then a month. I had a talk with God, I said, "Alright, now, I've given you my best, and this must not have been enough! So, show me another course so I can get at you, I'll do whatever it takes, you already know that."

No answer. No comfort. *Nutthin'*. Not a word.

Well, another month passed and I waited in a dry and dusty wasteland with no reason to ever hope I'd know my relationship God. I hadn't given up, but I was plum out of ideas. Then one day I was drivin' home to West Tennessee, which is about 150 miles west of Nashville, on a Sunday afternoon, after playing The Park. Just goin' down the interstate as usual, not thinkin' about anything in particular, and I just kinda looked up to my right at the pine trees one the side of the road, and all of the sudden the pine needles had light around them. Just for a second. Now afterwards, I remembered the Course in Miracles mentionin' light episodes. It said, when you have these light episodes true vision wouldn't be far behind. And it was right, because just as soon as the light around those pine needles disappeared, SNAP, I had a shift in consciousness, to where I was able to recognize my identity reflected back to me from those pine trees. My identity was the same identity as those pine trees. What!? Wait a minute, I've always seen this with things, and just hadn't been conscious of it. Although I've always been conscious of it in some way, I just wasn't conscious of being conscious of it. This isn't new, but it is definitely a fact. How could I have missed this?

And then I looked off to my left and saw a hawk perched on an old dead snag there, and, *same thing*. My identity was reflected back from the hawk *and* the dead snag. I was amazed that my identity could be reflected back from somethin' dead like an old snag, ya know? And, uh, it was *beyond* life and death. It was the same everywhere I looked. It was in the license plate numbers in the car in front of me, it was in all the different colors of the cars that went by, in the white lines on the interstate, in the asphalt. Same. Everywhere I looked I recognized my identity in everything. What a wonder!

Then there was a voice that rose up inside me and said in almost an audible tone, "This is it." I had found God, and God wasn't a he, a she, or an it. God was my very identity, and that identity was in everything *as* everything. Wow! [laughs] I don't even know what it is, but it's *me*, and there's no doubt about it, I see *me* everywhere.

I immediately realized that there had never been a moment that I was not conscious of this identity. I had always seen it in everything, and just hadn't recognized it. It had been there all the time. But just now, I was really conscious of it.

I became aware of understanding what Jesus was talkin' about when he said, "Before Abraham was, I am," because my identity transcended time. There was no time about it. I also knew what he meant when he said, "Beware, for I come like a thief in the night." Yes, yes, this was sudden, and unexpected.

This recognition was immediate and final. I had finally found God. Turns out, God is my identity, and the identity of everyone and everything. I also remembered the saying of Jesus, "I come not into to the world to condemn it, but that it might be saved through me." I understood that, that through me the world had just been saved. All of it, because my identity is spotless and clear and without taint of any kind, and everything is that spotless and taintless identity. Amazing, but so matter of fact, so final, and so all-inclusive.

There was just no way possible that I could put any words to this. I didn't even want to tell anybody about it, what was I gonna say? God is my identity, and I am he is, and he ain't a he...? [laughs] No way, think I'll just keep this to myself.

I'd never even heard of such a thing being possible. But I was seeing exactly what Jesus was talkin' about in my own unique way. And later came to find, when I read about the buddha, this is what he recognized in the mornin' star. I had recognized in the pine trees what buddha had recognized in the mornin' star--that's pretty cool. This is what he was talking about when he said, "I gained absolutely nothing from unexcelled enlightenment." Of course he'd say that, because like me, he had been seein' it his whole life without recognizin' it.

In that moment I could say without a doubt, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." I could also say, "I am the light of the world." But it was so ordinary, so obvious, I couldn't believe I hadn't grasped this when it'd been so out in the open and available right from the very beginning.

The jubilation of recognizin' this didn't last for long, not for long at all. After I set with it for a while I was dumbfounded and disturbed, I mean really disturbed. I'd lost my friend, and guide. I'd realized there wasn't a God that I could pray to anymore. We had merged into a single identity to where there was no difference. This was a bummer. All there was now was my stark identity reflected back to me through all the senses. My identity was in everything I saw, tasted, heard, smelled, touched, and thought. There was no denying it. It was self-evident in everything and everywhere, and it was without shape or form or comfort. It is stark immediacy. Just me. Identity without an identity.

I found myself along with everything else to be authoritative immediacy, and that was it. It's not even void. I later found it to be the identity of voidness. So this was found to be even more transcendent than voidness. There was no love, peace, joy, or bliss with it. Bummer.

Just stark immediacy. I found it to be extinct of any quality. The identity of all qualities without itself being a quality. You see, if I felt any feeling of any kind it was my identity that I was feelin'. I mean, the identity of that feelin', no matter if it was relative peace, love, bliss, hate, or any experience, my identity was the identity of every experience, and there was no relief in knowin' this.

Identity didn't offer any relief. My identity is the quintessence of disturbance, as well as peace. Makes no difference the quality of any experience, I am the identity of that experience. If I had experienced any relief, I could recognize the experience of relief to be an illusory experience, because my identity was what every conditioned experience really was, and my identity was not a condition of any kind--although the recognition of this authoritative identity was definitely an experience. Identity itself, though, was not an experience.

I was experiencin' this angle of perception without being different from it. The me-idea didn't go away. It just got jolted into recognizin' its true quintessence to be stark identity that was reflected back to me from everything. Talkin' about a marvel! A terribly disturbing marvel this was. Since I still felt disturbed I felt I had missed something along the way because I seemed to be worse off now than I had been before I had the perceptive shift. I was confused and confounded by finding myself to be stark immediacy with no juice.

I remembered that not only could I not die, but that I'd never been alive either. This identity wasn't alive, or never had been. It transcended life. Where was the juice, the peace, the love, and the joy that they sang about in church. I'm not feelin' it, ha. Glass-breakin' immediacy don't feel like anything but me and I can't find myself to be anything knowable. But I remain.

So, I decided to do the course in miracles again, thinkin' I would come clear on my confusing state. I spent the next year goin' through the course all over again, line by line, day after day. When I finished it the second time...nothin'. So, I decided to go through it a third time. 'Bout a week into the third time I got a strong message from within' that I needed to quit on it. It was beginning to drive me nuts. And I was already crazy enough, so I put it down.

I couldn't make heads or tails of my discovery. It had no use. It was just stark fact with no utility. I had several more shifts to come. What I'd recognized was the crown jewel for sure, but there had to be several more perceptive shifts to come before I could have any satisfaction with it. I went through a long and arduous acclimation period with this first particular shift. After being amused, disturbed, and puzzled by this recognition for a year or so, I met someone in the music business who'd been tinkerin' around with self-recognition for several years and he was an invaluable find for me because he knew about some good

books out there on the subject. I shared my experience with him, and he told me I'd found what everybody was lookin' for. So he gave me three really good books that helped me, and uh, helped me get some kind of conceptual grasp of what I had discovered.

One of these books was the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas. On the very first page I read these words: *Jesus said, 'Let him who seeks continue seekin' until he finds. When he finds he will be troubled. When he becomes troubled he'll be astonished, and he will reign over the all.*

Now, that hit a nerve for me. I went, "Yup, that's *exactly* what's happened in my case, for the most part." I had continued seekin' until I had found, and I had found, and I was troubled, and I had become astonished, and now all that's left is I got to find out how to rule over the all!

Now, notice this verse didn't say rule *over* all, it said rule over *the* all. There is a big, big difference. I didn't understand at the time, but now I do. What is the all? The all is absolute consciousness. I knew that I was the identity of the all, but I had another shift comin'. So now all I had to do was get on to this "all," because I had already found my identity to be that which is the absolute identity of everything.

The other two books my friend gave me were the words of two great masters. One of the books was I Am That by Nisargadatta Maharaj, and the other book was Talks with Ramana Maharshi. As I found my way with what I now refer to as absolute consciousness, these two fella's describe it as good as I've read or heard it spoken. They were seasoned masters of Advaita Vedanta, or nonduality, which I ended up finding to be the "all" mentioned in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas.

But before I got on to absolute consciousness I had another major shift, and a beneficial shift that would help me with the apprehension of the paradoxical absolute consciousness and make it more available. This shift was the shift of time and the eternal. This was a biggy. A great window into discoverin' nonduality. Discovering eternity turns out to be a most visceral way to experience absolute consciousness. I have only had one person I've pointed the now out to to where they actually really got what I was pointin' at. [1:27:28](#)

You know, comprehending the eternal now is a simple feat. Apprehending it takes an intuitive shift in perception. I'll explain in the way I pointed it out to my friend, Todd. He plays the bass with me in my band and we were ridin' down the road going to a gig one day and I thought I'd have a little fun with 'em, as we were obviously talkin' about time in someway or another, like what time it would be when we got back home that night or somethin' of that nature.

I said, "You know there really is no such thing as time, Todd." And of course, he said, "What are you talkin' about?" I said, "Well, I'll show you. Without lookin' at your watch, tell me what time it is." And he made some generalization. I said, "See, you don't know what time it is do ya?" And he said, "Well, let me look at my watch and I'll tell ya." So he looked at his watch and I said, "Can you tell me what time it is?" And he said with confidence whatever time he was readin' there at the moment.

I said: "Well, wait a minute, what about that second hand? It's movin' while you're talkin'. You're gettin' behind. You may try to lead the second hand, but you're still gonna be behind. If you break time down into seconds and then tenths of a second and hundredths and thousandths of a second the numbers are gonna be movin' by so fast that you can't read 'em, much less try to lead them enough to give me a correct time. So you can't even think or know what time it is, let alone speak it."

And he said, "You're right!"

"Okay," I said. "Tell me what now it is?"

And as everyone does when you ask that question, he got that dear in the headlight look in his eyes and said, "What *NOW* is it?"

And I said, "Yeah, it's not a trick question--what now is it?"

He said, "Well, hell, it's now, of course!"

I said, "Yeah, you see? This now don't ever change or move. This is the same now you were born in, lived your life in up to this point, and will die in. This is the now before there ever was a universe, and it will remain to be the now, the same one, when there is no universe. So, we still use time as a useful instrument of measurement, but it's nothin' more than an idea. The truth of the matter is that it's always now, period."

And he said, "Yeah, that makes sense. I understand that." And then he turned his head and looked out the window as if to let me know the conversation had come to an end. And I thought to myself, yeah, you've comprehended the eternal now, but you haven't apprehended it yet--you're hearin' the notes, but you ain't hearin' the music.

And we left it at that.

'Bout a month later I got a call from Todd one Sunday afternoon, and [laughs] just after I said hello he was screamin' in the phone: "*THERE AIN'T NO FUCKIN' TIME.* [laughter] *IT'S ALWAYS NOW!!!* It's so simple and obvious," he said. He said, "I was just sittin' out

here on the back porch smokin' a cigarette, not even thinkin' about it, and it just clicked: *there's only now! Ain't never been anything else.*"

Well, we had a good laugh, and that's the last time I've heard him mention it.

I play music at the Opry with ol' Todd almost every weekend, and his *now-satori* moment happened a couple of years ago, and I don't reckon it meant a thing to him. This is a good example of why I don't teach. It means nothin' to those who have had it pointed out to them who are not interested in recognizin' their most essential nature. If any recognition isn't applicable to one's everyday life, one will soon forget about it.

I can't express how valuable it was to me in my case to recognize this eternal changeless immediacy we call "now." This recognition for me came suddenly, and was final. *Wow, this is the moment that forever is. And it's too immediate to even measure. Yet it's everlasting.* [laughs] What a paradox!

I had previously had the idea of eternity being endless time, but was joyfully shocked to find there never was any time, that eternity is timeless. As I told Todd, time is a very useful tool and I use it every day, but it just ain't so. It's only an idea. But the eternal now is not a concept. It's a rock solid visceral fact that is self-evident. And I came to find this visceral sense to be absolute consciousness.

So I ended up puttin' this paradox to work in the doer/absolute consciousness paradigm. The doer is like time. The doer is a useful tool of apparent separation and individuality, but it's a fiction. For what the doer really is, is absolute consciousness, just as time is really the eternal now. This was a profound discovery for me. I could definitely see that time and my doer-idea were fictitious, but were very useful and not to be done away with.

After discovering this, I woke up one mornin' with the cross on my mind. I recognized the cross was a useful metaphor for time and the doer-idea as the horizontal beam, and the eternal and absolute consciousness were the vertical beam. I sensed that there where the vertical and the horizontal met, or crossed, that would be where I would someday be able to consciously live, to where the relative and absolute were the same. I already understood this great paradox, but I wasn't afeelin' it yet. I understood that the doer and absolute consciousness were one and the same, but I hadn't yet had the shift to where it was a physical or viscerally felt moment to moment experience. I was still hangin' out in the dry and dusty desert for some more dark, dreadful, and depressive self-inflicted ass-whippin's for years to come. [laughs]

Crawlin' through hell...

The next several years I got to crawl [1:35:21](#) through the belly of hell and meet death face to face. Out of the blue I started feelin' like I was dyin'. Shortly after that I started havin' period episodes of panic attacks. Then the panic attacks picked up in frequency and intensity as time went along. This was a long trek. Panic attacks gradually picked up steam over the next eleven years, until they reached a point to where I really didn't think I was gonna make it. I felt like the jig was up. I was havin' them every few minutes.

Now, I'd like to say somethin' about these panic attacks right up front. My younger brother had them, too, and he wouldn't give you two cents for self-recognition. It just so happened that these coincided with this particular part of my search where the existential death experience was imminent.

I was watchin' a TV program and a commercial came on about a course that I could buy that had to do with eradicatin' anxiety. Well, I wrote the number down and called them up, and they said the course was \$500 and I could get my money back if I wasn't satisfied--so I ordered it. When it arrived I opened it up and saw that it was a pretty comprehensive course. But it had a CD on the front page with people giving testimonials of their symptoms with panic attacks. So I sat down and listened to the CD with these folks describe my symptoms to a T. Then a doctor came on and said no one had ever died from a panic attack, that they knew of. I had a good laugh and I put the cd back in the cover, and I took the whole course and put it on a shelf upstairs, and I hadn't looked at it since.

I didn't ask for my money back; I figured I got my \$500 worth. [laughs] I remember that company doin' a follow-up call after about a month passed after I received it and this young feller came on the phone there on the other in and said, "How you doin' with your panic attacks?"

And I told him, "I'm great."

And he said, "Well, have you gotten over the panic attacks?"

And I told him, "No, I'm just not afraid of 'em now." And he hung up and I ain't heard from 'em since.

Knowin' that panic attacks wouldn't kill me didn't curb 'em though. They only got worse and more intense. I had somewhere along the way heard or read about the dark night of the soul and I just figured that's what I was goin' through. I thought, "Damn, this dark night sure is a long one for me." It started with fear when I was 16 years old and now I'm in my late 40's and it's still ampin' up to where I'm in almost constant communion with death. I thought I was goin' crazy, along with feelin' like I was dyin'. I had to get on the stage and entertain

people while having these panic attacks. [laughs] I wanted to run, but there was nowhere to run. I couldn't hide from myself. I got to wonderin', *when is this goin' to snap?*

Towards the end of the violent episodes with panic, these attacks got so debilitating that I went to see a doctor here in town. I told him I was havin' panic attacks, and he asked me what was causin' it. And I wasn't about to try to explain to him, so I just said, "I don't know, but I need somethin' to curb 'em." He gave me some Zoloft that seemed to relieve them a little, but it wasn't gettin' rid of 'em so I took a double dose of Zoloft to see if that'd do the trick and when I did I got the panic attack from hell. The worst one yet. I felt like the jig was up--*this is gonna finish me off*. So I called him back up and I said, "I feel like I'm gonna die here in a few minutes."

And he said, "Well, lemme call you in somethin' else." So he called me in some Xanax and I went over--managed to make it over to the drug store, and I got them and I took one, and I felt like I had a condom over my whole being. The Xanax worked, it knocked the panic attack, but I couldn't--couldn't go on feelin' like I had a film over me.

So I put the Xanax aside and decided to weather the storm without any help from the pharmaceutical companies. I'd already decided I was willin' to die for this, way back when I was at the age of 16 and I felt like I was bein' put to the test now, so I just backed my ears and went headlong into bearin' the consequences.

The shift of visceral absolute consciousness.

Well, finally, in the year of 2008 I was drivin' to Nashville to do the Opry--I was in a particularly desperate state this day. I had been at this a long time now, and I'd reached a new depth of nowhere to turn. I felt like I was hemmed in with no way out. I'd given it my all, all my life, and I was destitute and broken. I had by now recognized absolute consciousness to conceptually be my beingness, and I knew it to be the beingness of all, and I understood the paradox of absolute consciousness--but was somehow not finished with it, and was desperate to reach some finality with this sufferin' business.

While drivin' down the road for some unknown reason I felt like a plug had been pulled from both of my feet, and all of my solidity and anxiety just emptied out. It was all just washed out. Finally I got to feel the ecstasy of actually being the vacuous absolute consciousness that I had understood conceptually for decades. Ah...[sigh of relief] Finally. I knew I could never feel solid again, as I once had.

This was a new day. The panic attacks were mortally wounded that moment. They'd still come around to visit, but they were now on their way out. They got weaker and weaker, with less frequency, until they finally subsided. I felt the desperate existential seekin' take a

mortal blow, too. [laughs] There were a few loose ends that needed to be tied up and quite a bit of acclimation ahead, but I was no longer in an existential crisis. I felt I was finally over the hump.

Now the next step was to get acclimated with all these things that I've discovered. I was loaded for bearin' now, I was ready to start really livin' this. I soon found out that the acclimation process wasn't going to be any quick and easy venture. Gettin' acclimated with the recognition of absolute identity was no walk in the park, and unity consciousness wasn't gonna be a quickie either.

I had an unruly doer idea to deal with. Not only was the doer sense not willin' to go along easily, but the ravaged physical body and whirlin' intellect were a few more years away from acceptin' these shifts in perception. I had to wait it out, like I'd been doin' all the way, and let things shift into place naturally.

Not even now with my understanding and intuitive shifts in perception could I rush or push this along. I was like a new and clear distilled alcohol poured into a barrel to age into whiskey. And there just ain't no rushin' it.

The last shift in perception that I've had up to this point has been something that I had read about and felt like I really understood conceptually for a long time. It's not different from the time/eternal recognition, not all that different anyway, but it's another way of experiencin' an application of that shift.

The way I read it is the Chinese term, *wei wu wei*. The definition of the term as I understand it is action which is non-action. And I felt I really understood this paradox about absolute consciousness before I got the visceral experience of it, but now I found this to really have utility. This is the only shift I've had along the way that wasn't a jolt. I guess it wasn't a jolt because it's so similar to the time/eternal shift.

I don't even know when this one happened; I just found it to be so one day. I found that I was walkin' without walkin', breathin' without breathin', movin' around while perfectly still. That's the state of affairs now. [laughs] Of course it's not anything new; it's always been that way. Only now I'm just aware of it. It's the paradox of absolute consciousness. I'm stiller than still, no matter if I'm moving around or not. This is very cool and most natural.

Cool is a good word to describe this because this experience doesn't have the heat of desperation about it. It's just a natural fact. It's being without being, talking without talkin', thinking without thinkin', spontaneous and without intention. If there is effort, there's non-effort right there with it. No distinction to be made.

I read this sentence one day and I knew from this particular angle of perception the meaning of this passage. Someone said, "Buddha spoke for 50 years and not a word passed his lips." Ha! Yup, that's it, wei wu wei. Action which is non-action. It's a great line.

I never was any good at stoppin' thoughts. I really tried. I got pretty good at it, I thought, at one time, but just as soon as I'd let my guard down all the thoughts that'd been held at bay would come flooding in and I recognized I had about as much chance of stoppin' thoughts as I would stoppin' the wind outside. So I totally failed at that venture. All the practices I've ever tried over the years were failures, and this was one of 'em. Every one of them made me irritable and hard to be around. It's a wonder I didn't alienate everyone I came into contact with.

With this last shift there is always absence of thought. Perfect stillness, even if the thought process is runnin' wide open. Perfect stillness with any motion. Just natural unbroken stillness during any and every event. It's changeless, and constant. But like all the rest of these shifts I've been speaking of, this eternal stillness has always been the case. Only now I'm viscerally conscious of it. It's not new. Always been, just as I found it, right out in the wide open.

This has been a great, useful find for me. This I find to be the peace beyond all understanding that I'd read about in the bible 41 years earlier. And the equanimity the great sages spoke about. Peace. Finally. The peace of peace, and the peace of war. Absolute peace.

A metaphorical way of puttin' this experience of peace that I'm talkin' about is like being at work by yourself in the kitchen, doing whatever, with several appliances running: like the refrigerator, dishwasher running, radio playing on low, air conditioner humming--all of which you're not even giving any attention to. They're just sounds goin' on, a cacophany of sounds. And all of a sudden, the electricity goes off. It's absolute silence, absolute peace. For me: what a relief! [laughs]

So we're comin' up on the end now. There's been an interfacing of the doer, absolute consciousness, and absolute identity as being my singular experience. The three angles of perception are always homogenized or interfaced, and they're really not three. In my case it was needed to make these distinctions so that I could better understand myself.

So that's my recount of the seekin' and findin' venture. I'm really right back where I started when I arrived in the baby bed and before. I wasn't born. I just showed up identifyin' with a body in an instant. All these discoveries I've made over the span of my lifetime I already

knew when I arrived. The only difference now as opposed to then: I'm now lucid; I'm consciously aware of 'em. But I haven't gained anything, for this is the way it was and is before I recognized it to be so. Nothing has fallen off or went away, and never came back as they say. Nor have I dropped in to some void, freefalling forever. Please don't buy that dramatic bullshit. If you're trying to find your true nature, it just ain't so.

Nothing goes away nor do you fall into anything. What I found doesn't go away, and the one that found it didn't go away. He only recognized he wasn't what he thought he was. What he was was the whole, the whole of it all, the whole time. And it hadn't been hidden. He had somewhere bought into a lie that took him some serious inquiry and some intuitive perceptual shifts to be corrected and to come to truth.

So, what is it about you that is stiller than still, constant and unchangin'. You know, the changeless don't change. Find the changeless in all change and the identity of that changelessness and you've found yourself. The most common question I've heard asked the few times I've talked to groups out in public is this: *what happens to us when we die?* And if that's your question, the most obvious answer to that question is to meet with another question: *what was happening to you just prior to becomin' conscious? What were you doing just in the instant before you woke up in the baby bed?*

Find that out. If you contemplate that, I bet you'll come to the conclusion you were just fine, and always have been, and always will be. All this business of breakin' the cycle of birth and death--that don't apply to me, unless you mean finding out that I never have been born and never have died. Because I certainly never have been born, died, or even lived. These events or conditions don't apply to me. They're dreamy occurrences that magically appear somehow. Being associated with these dreamy events is also another magic trick. I don't even understand *that*. I don't understand magic.

There's no tellin' how many apparent times I've consciously associated with different physical bodies and names that I claimed as my own. But it's been *me* every time, no tellin' how many dreamy lifetimes I've experienced. All I know is that I became lucid in this one. Am I through dreamin' up lifetimes for myself? Shoot, I can't answer that. From my humanoid perspective I can't imagine consciously retaining my natural state forever without finding it in the entertaining paradigm of duality. I wouldn't doubt I stick my head under the lawnmower again and again. [laughs] If so, I'll only be dreaming. Now, whether I'm going to be lucid in those dreams is to be seen. If I'm lucid, even that will be a phenomenal event just as it is now. A mirage.

So, bodies come and bodies go. Universes appear and disappear. I remain, whether I'm self-reflective or not. Wei wu wei. Appearing without appearing. What a marvel!

Thanks for listenin'. See ya later.